



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701

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NOAA Fisheries Service Requests Public Comments on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Actions to Limit Commercial Effort for South Atlantic Black Sea Bass *(Comment Period Ends January 23, 2012)*

NOAA Fisheries Service requests public comments on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Amendment 18A to the Fishery Management Plan for the Snapper-Grouper Fishery of the South Atlantic Region (Amendment 18A). The Draft Environmental Impact Statement, which outlines potential biological and socioeconomic impacts of the actions in Amendment 18A, is now available for public review and comment. The primary purpose of Amendment 18A is to reduce effort in the black sea bass component of the snapper-grouper fishery to address the continued shortening of fishing seasons caused by derby fishing conditions.

Actions in Amendment 18A consider:

- Updates to the acceptable biological catch and annual catch limits for black sea bass based on a new stock assessment.
- An endorsement program for the commercial sectors' black sea bass pot segment of the snapper-grouper fishery. Endorsement holders who meet certain landings criteria and also have a valid (not expired) Unlimited Snapper-Grouper Permit would be allowed to use pot gear to harvest black sea bass.
- An appeals process for the black sea bass pot endorsement and endorsement transferability requirements.
- Modifications to accountability measures.
- A limit on the number of black sea bass pot tags that can be issued to endorsement holders with valid Unlimited Snapper Grouper Permits.
- A requirement to bring black sea bass pots back to shore at the end of each trip.
- A trip limit for the black sea bass commercial sector.
- A black sea bass spawning season closure.
- Modifications to commercial and recreational size limits for black sea bass.
- Improvements to data reporting on commercial and federally-permitted for-hire snapper-grouper vessels.

Request for Comments

Comments on this Draft Environmental Impact Statement must be received no later than January 23,

2012, to be considered by NOAA Fisheries Service. See the Addresses section for information on where and how to submit comments.

Addresses

Electronic or hardcopies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement may be obtained from:

- The NOAA Fisheries Service Web site <http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov/sf/SASnapperGrouperHomepage.htm>.
- The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Web site at <http://www.safmc.net>.

To request a CD of the draft environmental impact statement contact:

NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701
Phone: (727) 824-5305

You may submit comments by the following methods:

- **Electronic Submission:** The Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at <http://www.regulations.gov> (select "Submit Comment", then type in NOAA-NMFS-2011-0282 in the "Keyword or ID" box). All comments received are part of the public record and will generally be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> without change.
- **Mail:** NOAA Fisheries Service
Southeast Regional Office
Sustainable Fisheries Division
c/o Kate Michie
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701

All personal identifying information (for example, name, address, etc.) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible. Do not submit confidential business information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. NOAA Fisheries Service will accept anonymous comments. Attachments to electronic comments will be accepted in

Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only. Comments received through means not specified in this bulletin may not be considered.

More Information

For more information on Amendment 18A please refer to the [Amendment 18A Frequently Asked Questions](#) or the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Web page at: www.safmc.net.

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